

You can't come back if you never left

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Trajectories of change for local dialects are traditionally assessed through the frequency of variable use –examining either local or non-local variables as they emerge or dissipate over time. In situations of language change, we find that speakers are most often orienting to the *ideology* of what it means to be “local”, either avoiding or embracing local speech features. However, we must consider that the social evaluation of local identity and markers of localness are constantly changing, and we might expect to see this played out in linguistic changes across generations. Thus, when studies of change in apparent time reveal curvilinear patterns of change (DuBois and Horvath 2000, Labov 2001, Wolfram 2007), where older and younger generations have matched frequencies of variant use, but have different motivations and linguistic constraints we must consider the ways that “local” has changed for speakers. This generational shifts, which from the outset are somewhat unpredictable or do not fit the “smooth” curves of linguistic change are significant for our understanding of the ways in which social motivations are reflected in the language practice.

We investigate these issues of language change, ideologies of locality, and models of change by contrasting the paths of use (N=1290, 6296) and claimed use (N=225 surveys) in apparent time for two non-standard variants with differing levels of salience as markers of “local” Newfoundland English: *s*-marking (e.g., *I goes*) and participial preterits (e.g., *I seen it*). Both features decline in actual rates of use across generations. But *s*-marking (salient and local) shows a curvilinear pattern of claimed use, and changes in linguistic constraints across generations, while participials (non-salient and local) maintain high rates of claimed use and maintain similar linguistic behavior across generations.

Our findings, when considered along with demographic constraints on use and claimed use found in the survey data, help us explain the local social conditioning of language change. In this situation, the variables themselves have not changed their social meaning or evaluation—they are all still considered “local” markers of speech by nearly all speakers. Rather, it is the evaluation of local identity that shows changes across the generations. This results in traditional variables that index localness being applied in different patterns and frequencies by younger speakers, than that of their parents and grandparent. Specifically, we see salient local dialect features enjoying a reemergence in the local dialect repertoire of the younger generation, but with different linguistic constraints and for different purposes than that of their grandparents with whom they share similar frequencies of use.

The educational and social changes that have happened in Newfoundland in the past 60 years prove to be significant when examining patterns of language change. Recent moves to embrace Newfoundland culture have provided a springboard for young residents to discover their past while earlier ideologies to move towards mainstream speech affected middle-aged speakers in different ways. The use of local language, specifically salient language features, has responded to these changes in the ideology of what it means to be local and have shown that features do not leave, but rather have the possibility of reemerging as ideologies shift.